

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 746
INFO AMEMBASSY ATHENS
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AMEMBASSY NICOSIA
USMISSION USNATO
AMCONSUL ADANA
AMCONSUL ISTANBUL
AMCONSUL IZMIR
EUCOM
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES
USDOCOLANDSOUTHEAST IZMIR
DIA/DN2
USNMR SHAPE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ANKARA 1322

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, TU
SUBJECT: POLITICAL TRENDS ANALYSIS: CURRENT STATE AND PROSPECTS
OF THE JUSTICE PARTY

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH DISSATISFACTION WITH THE LEADERSHIP
OF SULEYMAN DEMIREL LED TO DEFECTIONS FROM HIS JUSTICE PARTY
(JP) AND THE FALL OF DEMIREL'S GOVERNMENT IN DECEMBER, 1977, FOR
THE PRESENT DEMIREL APPEARS FIRMLY ENTRENCHED AS JP LEADER.
NO SERIOUS CHALLENGE TO DEMIREL'S POSITION IS EXPECTED TO
OCCUR BEFORE NEXT FALL, IF THEN. OVERCOMING SERIOUS ORGANIZATIONAL
WEAKNESSES WHICH WERE EVIDENT IN LAST YEAR'S ELECTION CAMPAIGNS
APPEARS TO BE MAIN TASK FACING JP LEADERSHIP AND CONSTITUTES
ONE OF THE MAIN FACTORS IN DETERMINING THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE
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OPPOSITION WHICH THE LEADERS WILL FACE AT THE NEXT PARTY CONVENTION.
THE JP SEEMS GENERALLY BETTER OFF BEING IN THE OPPOSITION NOW,
FREE OF SHARING PUBLIC OPPROBRIUM OF ITS FORMER COALITION
PARTNERS AND IN POSITION TO REAP THE POLITICAL BENEFIT OF THE
DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED BY PRIMIN ECEVIT AND HIS REPUBLICAN PEOPLE'S
PARTY (RPP) IN DEALING WITH THE INTRACTABLE NATIONAL PROBLEMS WITH
WHICH THE DEMIREL GOVERNMENTS STRUGGLED. DEMIREL HAS ALREADY

BEGUN TO GO IN THE OFFENSIVE AGAINST ECEVIT, ATTACKING HIM ON THE ISSUES OF "COUNTER-GUERRILLA" AND THE "NATIONAL DEFENSE CONCEPT." AFTER ITS UNHAPPY EXPERIENCES WITH THE ERRATIC, MUSLIM-FUNDAMENTALIST NATIONAL SALVATION PARTY (NSP), ANOTHER COALITION INVOLVING THAT PARTY WOULD PROBABLY BE OUT OF THE QUESTION FOR THE JP EVEN IF THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT WERE TO FALL. JP SUPPORTERS ALSO GENERALLY FEEL THAT AN RPP-JP COALITION WOULD BE UNWORKABLE.

END SUMMARY

2. A MONTH AND ONE-HALF AFTER HIS FALL FROM THE PRIME MINISTERSHIP, JUSTICE PARTY (JP) LEADER DEMIREL APPEARS FIRMLY IN CONTROL OF HIS PARTY. ALTHOUGH DISSATISFACTION WITH HIS LEADERSHIP APPARENTLY WAS THE MAIN CAUSE FOR THE ELEVEN DEFECTIONS FROM THE JP WHICH BROUGHT DOWN HIS GOVERNMENT LAST DECEMBER, BOTH THE PRESS AND POLITICAL OBSERVERS WITH WHOM EMBASSY AND CONSULATES ARE IN CONTACT AGREE IN STATING THAT THERE IS NO IMMEDIATE PROSPECT FOR EITHER MORE DEFECTIONS OR FOR ANY SERIOUS CHALLENGE TO DEMIREL'S POSITION AS PARTY LEADER. INTERNAL DISSATISFACTION WITH DEMIREL AND HIS CLOSE ASSOCIATES REMAINS, BUT THE LACK OF A CREDIBLE ALTERNATIVE LEADER, COMBINED WITH A NEW "GIVE HIM A CHANCE" ATTITUDE, APPEAR LIKELY TO POSTPONE ANY KIND OF A LEADERSHIP SHOWDOWN AT LEAST UNTIL THE PARTY'S NEXT GENERAL CONVENTION (EXPECTED IN OCTOBER). JP VICE CHAIRMAN SADETTIN BILGIC, ONE OF THE MOST PROMINENT DISSIDENTS, SUFFERS FROM THE STIGMA OF HAVING PREVIOUSLY DESERTED THE JP FOR THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY AND OF HAVING ONLY

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RECENTLY RETURNED TO THE FOLD. WHILE THE FORMER DEMOCRATIC PARTY MEMBERS ARE A LARGE ELEMENT WITHIN THE PARTY AND WOULD BE A LIKELY COMPONENT OF ANY FUTURE "DUMP DEMIREL" DRIVE, NEITHER BILGIC NOR OTHER MEMBERS OF THIS GROUP WOULD APPEAR ABLE TO SUCCESSFULLY LEAD SUCH A MOVE. FORMER ENERGY MINISTER KAMRAN INAN, WHOSE DESIRE TO SUPPLANT DEMIREL IS WELL KNOWN, IS TOO MUCH OF A COSMOPOLITAN SOPHISTICATE TO BE A LOGICAL LEADER FOR THE CONSERVATIVE, RURAL-BASED JP, AND HIS KURDISH ORIGINS AND SWISS WIFE ARE FURTHER IMPEDIMENTS TO HIS AMBITIONS.

3. DURING THE CAMPAIGNS FOR BOTH LAST JUNE'S GENERAL ELECTIONS AND LAST DECEMBER'S LOCAL ELECTIONS, AS WELL AS DURING NON-CAMPAIGN PERIODS, THERE HAVE BEEN WIDESPREAD COMPLAINTS THAT THE JP CENTRAL ORGANIZATION HAS FAILED TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE LEADERSHIP AND SUPPORT TO THE JP LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS, AS A CONSEQUENCE OF WHICH JP ELECTORAL PERFORMANCE HAS SUFFERED AND MANY FORMERLY-ACTIVE LOCAL SUPPORTERS HAVE WITHDRAWN FROM ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE PARTY. THE IZMIR JP ORGANIZATION HAS DRAWN UP PLANS AND IS MAKING PREPARATIONS FOR A MAJOR ORGANIZATIONAL EFFORT AMONG STUDENTS, WORKERS, YOUNG ENGINEERS,

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ANKARA 1322

TRADESMEN AND SHOPKEEPERS. WHILE THE JP IS NOTORIOUSLY WEAK IN THE FIRST TWO GROUPS, EXPECIALLY AMONG STUDENTS, CONSERVATIVE ELEMENTS OF WHICH HAVE LARGELY GONE BY DEFAULT TO THE ULTRA-RIGHT NATIONALIST ACTION PARTY (NAP), THE IDEA OF SUCH AN ORGANIZATION EFFORT HAS NOT YET BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE CENTRAL ORGANIZATION. THE IZMIR ORGANIZATION, ONE OF THE MOST-PUBLICIZED CENTERS OF JP DISSIDENCE, PLANS TO GIVE DEMIREL AND THE REST OF THE CENTRAL LEADERSHIP A CHANCE TO ACT ON SUCH PARTY NEEDS, FREE FROM THE DISTRACTIONS OF BEING IN POWER, BUT A MAJOR SHOWDOWN MAY DEVELOP AT THE JP'S NEXT BIENNIAL PARTY CONGRESS (EXPECTED IN OCTOBER) IF THE LEADERS ARE SEEN TO FAIL TO TAKE NECESSARY ACTIONS.

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4. CONTRACTS BOTH WITHIN AND OUTSIDE THE JP INSIST THAT THE PARTY IS FAR BETTER OFF AT THE PRESENT TIME IN THE OPPOSITION THAN IT WOULD BE IN A CONTINUATION OF THE OLD COALITION. ASSOCIATION WITH ITS FORMER PARTNERS, THE NAP AND NECMETTIN ERBAKAN'S ERRATIC, ISLAMIC-FUNDAMENTALIST NATIONAL SALVATION PARTY (NSP)--ESPECIALLY THE LATTER--IS WIDELY SEEN TO HAVE BEEN DAMAGING TO THE PARTY, BOTH BECAUSE IT WAS PREVENTED FROM PROPERLY COMPETING WITH THESE TWO RIVALS FOR THE CONSERVATIVE VOTE AND BECUASE THE JP HAD TO SHARE WIDESPREAD PUBLIC DISTASTE FOR ITS EXTREMIST PARTNERS. THE JP ALSO HOPES TO SEE PRIMIN ECEVIT AND HIS REPUBLICAN PEOPLE'S PARTY (RPP) REAP THE POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE SERIOUS NATIONAL PROBLEMS WITH WHICH THE JP STRUGGLED SO LANG AND, THANKS IN LARGE PART TO THE NSP, SO INEFFECTIVELY. WITH THE RPP NOW IN THE POSITION OF HAVING TO DELIVER ON ITS LONG-ADVERTIZED CLAIM TO BE THE ONLY PARTY CAPABLE OF SOLVING TURKEY'S PROBLEMS, DEMIREL HAS WASTED LITTLE TIME IN MOVING TO THE OFFENSIVE. EVEN RPP LOYALISTS WERE FORCED TO CONCEDE HIM A VICTORY ON THE "COUNTER-GUERRILLA" ISSUE (ANKARA 995). AFTER LETTING RPP SPOKESMEN CREATE HEADLINES FOR DAYS WITH CHARGES THAT THE ARMED FORCES AND SECURITY SERVICES WERE HARBORING AN ILLEGAL ORGANIZATION FOR INTERNAL ESPIONAGE AND TORTURE, DEMIREL DEMANDED THAT ECEVIT EITHER PROVE THE CHARGES AND DISBAND THE ORGANIZATION OR ADMIT THAT THE REPUTATION OF THE ARMED FORCES HAD BEEN UNWISELY DAMAGED BY FALSE CHARGES. ECEVIT WAS UNABLE TO DO EITHER, AND THE ISSUE ABRUPTLY DISAPPEARED FROM RPP STATEMENTS AND THE PRESS. MORE RECENTLY, DEMIREL HAS CHALLENGED ECEVIT TO CLARIFY THE "NEW DEFENSE CONCEPT" WHICH, FOR AT LEAST THE PAST YEAR, HE HAS BEEN SAYING WAS A GLARING NATIONAL NEED WHICH THE RPP WOULD FILL, BUT WHICH HE HAS THUS FAR FAILED TO

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DEFINE. ON FEBRUARY 15 DEMIREL ACCUSED ECEVIT OF CONTINUOUSLY TALKING ABOUT THE NED DEFENSE CONCEPT BUT NEVER EXPLAINING IT, CHARGED THAT ECEVIT HIMSELF DID NOT UNDERSTAND IT, AND CHALLENGED HIM TO SPELL OUT THE CONCEPT OR STOP "CREATING AN ATMOSPHERE OF HESITATION" WHICH UNDERMINED THE COUNTRY'S DEFENSE.

5. DEMIREL'S OFFENSIVE, HOWEVER, IS NOT AIMED AT TOPPLING THE GOVERNMENT; THE JP'S INTEREST IS GENERALLY SEEN TO LIE IN ALLOWING ECEVIT AND THE RPP TO BECOME THOROUGHLY DISCREDITED. SHOULD THE GOVERNMENT EVENTUALLY FALL, THERE IS NO CLEAR PROSPECT THAT THE JP COULD THEREBY RETURN TO POWER, SINCE IT IS GENERALLY AGREED THAT A NEW COALITION WITH THE NSP WOULD BE FATAL TO BOTH THE PARTY'S UNITY AND ITS FUTURE ELECTORAL CHANCES, WHEREAS

A "GRAND COALITION" WITH THE RPP CONTINUES TO BE VIEWED
AS UNWORKABLE BECAUSE OF THE DEPTHS OF THE RIVALRY BETWEEN
THE TWO PARTIES.

6. CONSULATES GENERAL IZMIR AND ISTANBUL AND CONSULATE
ADANA MADE SUBSTANTIAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE PREPARATION
OF THIS REPORT.
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